

## HUGO THE BASTARD.

BY ROBERT BUCHANAN.

I picked this quarrel, D'Avanne, with thee,  
And I thank thee for giving that death-thrust  
sure.  
Little, I swear, did it matter to me  
Whether Blanche thy mistress was stained or  
pure;  
All that I sought, when I picked this fight,  
Was a knightly death by the hand of a knight.  
Hold thy kerchief, De Loya, to my breast,  
And stanch the red gap as well as you can—  
Ugh! Jesu be praised! I shall soon be at rest—  
A priest—no, by heaven! I your hand, D'Avanne,  
My friends, I trust? You forgive the lie?  
Injure you, slander you, faith, not I!  
Thy Blanche is as pure as my sin is small;  
I questioned her purity—only to die.  
And I've proved she is pure with my blood,  
that's all.

Ah, friend, all slander is most accurate;  
But the slander of one's own eyes is the worst.  
Don't not, don't not, don't not, D'Avanne,  
By thy faith in thy mistress ever trust,  
So walk erect the full height of a man,  
When I am dust.

De Loya, you knew her? My wife that is dead?  
Nay, man, never tremble and hang your head?  
I know what I'm talking about, and moreover  
The scandalousness of dull Navarre  
Has trodden the whole tale up, spawn that  
they are.

Chew'd the cud, too, as cattle eat succulent  
clover.  
Let them? who hinder? not I, I swear.  
Who is going to join leg up there?  
Hush! hush! De Loya, prop my head on your  
knee—  
Your hands, but come closer—listen to me.

What was I but a sin in the night  
Sprung up at last to a human height,  
Hugo the Bastard, sans name, sans treasure,  
The mortal sum of a monarch's pleasure?  
Rugged to the Court, with my sword on  
loin.

Bugged of feature, but scant of coin,  
Will over his golden beard snarled Francis,  
And gave me some little fighting to do;  
So I rose in the world by the merest chances,  
And won in my own opinion too.  
But look at this head, like the head of an elf;  
This beak of a nose, these eyeballs yellow;  
I've looked in the mirror and hated myself—  
I was ever the same—an ill-favored fellow!  
How much, moreover, of no degree!  
God bless her, therefore, for smiling on me.

How they stared! Just as you, De Loya, stare  
now!  
Even King Francis made a grimace!  
None of the gad-fies could understand how  
A lady so perfect of form and face  
Should place her white little dove of a hand  
In the great black palm of M'sieu Hugo.

She did it, though, and they tied the band  
Snug enough in a town where few go.  
From Paris we came to Navarre, and bade  
Francis adieu, and his gorgeous train—  
I sat me down on the side of the bed,  
Thought, trembled, and muttered, "Let her go!"  
(Raise me higher—prop my head!)  
You know what the scandalous moulder said.)

I kept my secret—till now (I die!)  
De Loya, De Loya, bend down and hark!  
I fought, I swaged, but by and by,  
I rose one night, and groped in the dark,  
It is a lamp, and lifted the lid of the chest,  
And saw her . . . in her strippling's raiment  
drest;

Her face shivered up, with her horror, dead  
eyes  
Blanchy staring on me—  
Fair limbs twisting in their agonies.  
And . . . Marie!—Marie!

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While she rose on her pillow, and strained me  
tight,  
White and black hair in the dim lamp-light  
Sparkled on a bosom too stony to grieve.  
But she wept hot, but gazed in a pale fright  
With her great dark eyes. Ay, D'Avanne was  
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Women are nobler than men believe.

Off I rode! Shall I own it, not so unwilling  
To return to the business of wounding and  
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I was happy, most happy, though pleasure  
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I had feared any change, yet was pleased when  
it came.  
Ah, woe! what we male weathercocks! what  
are women should love us so utterly?  
Off I rode, road on hip; and was soon far  
away.

Ticking the Spaniards' yellow gizzards,  
Fighting, tramping, 'neath sun and star, away,  
Till these cheeks of mine were as brown as  
lizards.  
Not a scratch got I. The sharp steel shaved me  
honestly as razors,  
I knew his mother-in-law I cannot tell,  
But on two occasions angels saved me—

Angels! Ah, I forgot a boy—  
(How I bleed!—press the kerchief closer, De  
Loya!)  
An Italian boy, with great black eyes,  
Tanned cheeks and an elin head,  
And a drooping under-lip, berry-red,  
Where the senses lighted like butterflies.  
He turned up, pale, in the midst of the strife,  
And brought me a letter from madame my wife—  
Blessings, injunctions, protestations,  
Kisses, prayers, asseverations.

Then the boy who brings you this, my Hugo,  
A poor Italian, Angelo,  
Craves that in battle he may with you go,  
And learn what grown men, warriors, know;  
Thy pace, thy benchman, let him be—  
I know his mother-in-law I cannot tell,  
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With cheeks blushing ruddy as junipers,  
And I liked him—because he had eyes like hers.  
I made him my benchman, as she bade—  
A capital benchman, too, he made,  
Though once or twice, in the thick of the fight,  
I fancied I saw his cheeks turn white:  
Yet he bit his lips and upheld his head,  
Struggled among the living and dead.  
And saved my life three times, he said.  
Tanned and yellow'd, but full of fun,  
Home we rode when the war was done:  
Some dozen leagues from Castle Blois  
I parted from Angelo, the boy.

Who promised to join me, his master, anon.  
At home at the Castle, I galloped on.  
And my heart was bounding to look on her—  
Till she stood at the gate with her arms outstretched,  
And I slipped from the saddle and clasped her  
round.

While the servants shouted, the mastiff yelled,  
And a hiss like quicksilver sparkled through me!

The very next morning there came a billet  
From Francis, compelling me, willy nilly,  
On urgent affairs to the Court to repair straight;  
Grumbling a little, I jumped on my mare  
straight.

Rode, entered Paris, saw Gold Beard again,  
Who held out his hand with an air that de-  
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Who praised me galore for my doings in Spain,  
And, drawing his sword, with that grace of his,  
How glorious I felt when I mounted to ride  
To Marie, in the pride of my honor new-gained!  
How the hedges and fields whistled by, as I  
strained.

Every nerve of the brute, heaving on her side;  
But, lo! a trusted servant met me midway—  
(Tried, mark you, and true—he he dammed with  
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That the dark-eyed Italian, Angelo,  
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into the room where my lady slept.

I listened, dumb, then white as death,  
Struck the grey fiend on the mouth, and he fell,  
But followed, with all the devils of hell.  
As I galloped onward, and scarce drew breath,  
Till I came to Castle Blois by night.  
When the moon was up, and the fields were a  
light.

Like the gleam of a lamp on a face that is dead.  
(Higher—and grasp me under the shoulder;  
There's a hammering, clamoring, here in my  
head!  
I'm growing weaker—I'm growing colder!)  
Swiftly I sprang to my lady's room.  
The grey slave followed, and bore a lamp—  
We rushed upstairs with a hasty tramp—  
And, crouching back in the scattered gloom,  
Without the door of her chamber, ho—  
His bright eyes sparkling, Angelo.

'Twas enough—the throat I gripped him  
tight.  
He could not speak—but his eyes were bright  
With a beautiful horror, strange to see—  
I hissed to the knave, "A death by steel  
Were too sweet an end for such as he;  
Help me to grip him neck and throat,  
And place him in the great oaken chest  
That lies in my chamber—for there he shall rest  
Till he rot!" The grey knave, who was used to  
such work—  
He had camped with the Arab, and smoked  
with the Turk—  
Lent a hand, and 'twas done; and along the  
gloom,  
The boy was borne to his living tomb:  
And I ever forgot, De Loya,  
That last desperate look of the boy,  
Who strove in vain to utter a cry,  
As we tomb'd him in silence, and left him to die!

Then strode I back, with a fiend in my soul,  
These yellow eyes glaring, my face white as  
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Firmly gripping the sword, free to settle the  
score.  
Black accursed with the woman, my mistress,  
But no!  
Her chamber was empty, the bird had fled,  
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Thy pace, thy benchman, let him be—  
I know his mother-in-law I cannot tell,  
But on two occasions angels saved me—

With cheeks blushing ruddy as junipers,  
And I liked him—because he had eyes like hers.  
I made him my benchman, as she bade—  
A capital benchman, too, he made,  
Though once or twice, in the thick of the fight,  
I fancied I saw his cheeks turn white:  
Yet he bit his lips and upheld his head,  
Struggled among the living and dead.  
And saved my life three times, he said.  
Tanned and yellow'd, but full of fun,  
Home we rode when the war was done:  
Some dozen leagues from Castle Blois  
I parted from Angelo, the boy.

Who promised to join me, his master, anon.  
At home at the Castle, I galloped on.  
And my heart was bounding to look on her—  
Till she stood at the gate with her arms outstretched,  
And I slipped from the saddle and clasped her  
round.

While the servants shouted, the mastiff yelled,  
And a hiss like quicksilver sparkled through me!

The very next morning there came a billet  
From Francis, compelling me, willy nilly,  
On urgent affairs to the Court to repair straight;  
Grumbling a little, I jumped on my mare  
straight.

Rode, entered Paris, saw Gold Beard again,  
Who held out his hand with an air that de-  
lighted me.  
Who praised me galore for my doings in Spain,  
And, drawing his sword, with that grace of his,  
How glorious I felt when I mounted to ride  
To Marie, in the pride of my honor new-gained!  
How the hedges and fields whistled by, as I  
strained.

Every nerve of the brute, heaving on her side;  
But, lo! a trusted servant met me midway—  
(Tried, mark you, and true—he he dammed with  
my hat!)

Who whispered—(now mark how De Loya turns  
away)  
You know what he whispered, De Loya—ay, but  
wait!  
That the dark-eyed Italian, Angelo,  
The strippling whose face I had fancied so,  
Had been watched one night as he quietly crept  
into the room where my lady slept.

I listened, dumb, then white as death,  
Struck the grey fiend on the mouth, and he fell,  
But followed, with all the devils of hell.  
As I galloped onward, and scarce drew breath,  
Till I came to Castle Blois by night.  
When the moon was up, and the fields were a  
light.

Like the gleam of a lamp on a face that is dead.  
(Higher—and grasp me under the shoulder;  
There's a hammering, clamoring, here in my  
head!  
I'm growing weaker—I'm growing colder!)  
Swiftly I sprang to my lady's room.  
The grey slave followed, and bore a lamp—  
We rushed upstairs with a hasty tramp—  
And, crouching back in the scattered gloom,  
Without the door of her chamber, ho—  
His bright eyes sparkling, Angelo.

'Twas enough—the throat I gripped him  
tight.  
He could not speak—but his eyes were bright  
With a beautiful horror, strange to see—  
I hissed to the knave, "A death by steel  
Were too sweet an end for such as he;  
Help me to grip him neck and throat,  
And place him in the great oaken chest  
That lies in my chamber—for there he shall rest  
Till he rot!" The grey knave, who was used to  
such work—  
He had camped with the Arab, and smoked  
with the Turk—  
Lent a hand, and 'twas done; and along the  
gloom,  
The boy was borne to his living tomb:  
And I ever forgot, De Loya,  
That last desperate look of the boy,  
Who strove in vain to utter a cry,  
As we tomb'd him in silence, and left him to die!

Then strode I back, with a fiend in my soul,  
These yellow eyes glaring, my face white as  
snow,  
Firmly gripping the sword, free to settle the  
score.  
Black accursed with the woman, my mistress,  
But no!  
Her chamber was empty, the bird had fled,  
I sat me down on the side of the bed,  
Thought, trembled, and muttered, "Let her go!"  
(Raise me higher—prop my head!)  
You know what the scandalous moulder said.)

How they stared! Just as you, De Loya, stare  
now!  
Even King Francis made a grimace!  
None of the gad-fies could understand how  
A lady so perfect of form and face  
Should place her white little dove of a hand  
In the great black palm of M'sieu Hugo.

She did it, though, and they tied the band  
Snug enough in a town where few go.  
From Paris we came to Navarre, and bade  
Francis adieu, and his gorgeous train—  
I sat me down on the side of the bed,  
Thought, trembled, and muttered, "Let her go!"  
(Raise me higher—prop my head!)  
You know what the scandalous moulder said.)

I kept my secret—till now (I die!)  
De Loya, De Loya, bend down and hark!  
I fought, I swaged, but by and by,  
I rose one night, and groped in the dark,  
It is a lamp, and lifted the lid of the chest,  
And saw her . . . in her strippling's raiment  
drest;

Her face shivered up, with her horror, dead  
eyes  
Blanchy staring on me—  
Fair limbs twisting in their agonies.  
And . . . Marie!—Marie!

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